

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An airbag module for protecting an occupant of a vehicle from impact, the airbag module comprising:

a cushion that inflates from a compacted configuration to protect the occupant from impact; and

a housing shaped to keep the cushion in the compacted configuration until inflation, wherein the housing is formed substantially of a ~~flexible~~ fabric material, the housing comprising an attachment throat attachable to the vehicle;

wherein the cushion is attached to the housing such that the inflation gas expels the cushion from the housing through the attachment throat and flows into the cushion to inflate the cushion.

Claim 2 (original): The airbag module of claim 1, wherein the housing comprises a first bracket attached to the attachment throat and to an inlet of the cushion, wherein the first bracket comprises at least one attachment feature that facilitates attachment of the bracket to the vehicle.

Claim 3 (original): The airbag module of claim 2, further comprising a second bracket, wherein adjacent portions of the attachment throat and the inlet are sandwiched between the first and second brackets.

Claim 4 (original): The airbag module of claim 2, wherein the attachment throat is formed as a single piece with at least a portion of the cushion.

Claim 5 (original): The airbag module of claim 4, wherein the attachment throat comprises a pleat attached to the first bracket.

Claim 6 (original): The airbag module of claim 1, further comprising an inflator contained within the housing, wherein the inflator produces inflation gas in response to receipt of an activation signal.

Claim 7 (currently amended): The airbag module of claim 6, wherein the attachment throat is part of an outer wall of the housing, the housing comprising a barrier which is formed as a single piece with the outer wall ~~formed of a flexible material~~, wherein the barrier is positioned between the inflator and the cushion in the compacted configuration to provide an inflator retention portion containing the inflator and a cushion retention portion containing the cushion in the compacted configuration.

Claim 8 (original): The airbag module of claim 7, wherein the inflator comprises a diffuser extending through a first orifice of the barrier such that the diffuser is positioned generally within the cushion retention portion.

Claim 9 (original): The airbag module of claim 8, wherein the diffuser extends from proximate a center of the inflator, along a direction generally perpendicular to an axis of the inflator.

Claim 10 (original): The airbag module of claim 8, wherein the barrier is formed by first and second flaps extending from the outer wall, wherein the first orifice is formed in the first flap, wherein the first and second flaps are wrapped around the inflator along opposite directions, wherein the diffuser extends through a second orifice formed in the second flap.

Claim 11 (original): The airbag module of claim 8, wherein the barrier is formed by a fabric wall extending between opposing sides of the outer wall, wherein the outer wall comprises

first and second retention portions that extend around the inflator such that the inflator is retained between the barrier and the retention portions.

Claim 12 (original): The airbag module of claim 1, wherein the attachment throat is attachable to an instrument panel of the vehicle such that the airbag module is suspended within the instrument panel.

Claim 13 (original): The airbag module of claim 12, wherein the housing comprises at least one vent formed in the flexible material and positioned to vent gas into the instrument panel during inflation of the cushion.

Claim 14 (currently amended): An airbag module for protecting an occupant of a vehicle from impact, the airbag module comprising:

an inflator that produces inflation gas in response to receipt of an activation signal;
a cushion that receives the inflation gas and inflates from a compacted configuration to protect the occupant from impact; and
a housing mountable within an instrument panel of the vehicle to contain the inflator and the cushion in the compacted configuration, wherein the housing is formed substantially of a ~~flexible~~ fabric material.

Claim 15 (original): The airbag module of claim 14, wherein the housing comprises an attachment throat attachable to the vehicle, and a first bracket attached to the attachment throat and to an inlet of the cushion, wherein the first bracket comprises at least one attachment feature that facilitates attachment of the bracket to the vehicle.

Claim 16 (original): The airbag module of claim 15, further comprising a second bracket, wherein adjacent portions of the attachment throat and the inlet are sandwiched between the first and second brackets.

Claim 17 (original): The airbag module of claim 15, wherein the attachment throat is formed as a single piece with at least a portion of the cushion.

Claim 18 (original): The airbag module of claim 17, wherein the attachment throat comprises a pleat attached to the first bracket.

Claim 19 (currently amended): The airbag module of claim 14, wherein the housing comprises an outer wall and a barrier ~~formed of a flexible material, which is formed as a single piece with the outer wall~~, wherein the barrier is positioned between the inflator and the cushion in the compacted configuration to provide an inflator retention portion containing the inflator and a cushion retention portion containing the cushion in the compacted configuration.

Claim 20 (original): The airbag module of claim 19, wherein the inflator comprises a diffuser extending through a first orifice of the barrier such that the diffuser is positioned generally within the cushion retention portion.

Claim 21 (original): The airbag module of claim 20, wherein the diffuser extends from proximate a center of the inflator, along a direction generally perpendicular to an axis of the inflator.

Claim 22 (original): The airbag module of claim 20, wherein the barrier is formed by first and second flaps extending from the outer wall, wherein the first orifice is formed in the first flap, wherein the first and second flaps are wrapped around the inflator along opposite directions, wherein the diffuser extends through a second orifice formed in the second flap.

Claim 23 (original): The airbag module of claim 20, wherein the barrier is formed by a fabric wall extending between opposing sides of the outer wall, wherein the outer wall comprises first and second retention portions that extend around the inflator such that the inflator is retained between the barrier and the retention portions.

Claim 24 (currently amended): An airbag module for protecting an occupant of a vehicle from impact, the airbag module comprising:

an inflator that produces inflation gas in response to receipt of an activation signal;

a cushion that receives the inflation gas and inflates from a compacted configuration to protect the occupant from impact; and

a housing comprising an outer wall, at least a portion of which is formed as a single piece with at least a portion of the cushion, wherein the housing contains the inflator and keeps the cushion in the compacted configuration until inflation, wherein the housing is formed substantially of a fabric material.

Claim 25 (original): The airbag module of claim 24, wherein the housing comprises an attachment throat attachable to the vehicle, and a first bracket attached to the attachment throat and to an inlet of the cushion, wherein the first bracket comprises at least one attachment feature that facilitates attachment of the bracket to the vehicle.

Claim 26 (original): The airbag module of claim 25, wherein the attachment throat comprises a pleat attached to the first bracket.

Claim 27 (currently amended): The airbag module of claim 24, wherein the housing further comprises a barrier and an outer wall formed of a flexible material, wherein the barrier and the outer wall are formed as a single piece, wherein the barrier is positioned between the inflator and the cushion in the compacted configuration to provide an inflator retention portion containing the inflator and a cushion retention portion containing the cushion in the compacted configuration.

Claim 28 (original): The airbag module of claim 27, wherein the inflator comprises a diffuser extending through a first orifice of the barrier such that the diffuser is positioned generally within the cushion retention portion.

Claim 29 (original): The airbag module of claim 28, wherein the diffuser extends from proximate a center of the inflator, along a direction generally perpendicular to an axis of the inflator.

Claim 30 (original): The airbag module of claim 28, wherein the barrier is formed by first and second flaps extending from the outer wall, wherein the first orifice is formed in the first flap, wherein the first and second flaps are wrapped around the inflator along opposite directions, wherein the diffuser extends through a second orifice formed in the second flap.

Claim 31 (original): The airbag module of claim 28, wherein the barrier is formed by a fabric wall extending between opposing sides of the outer wall, wherein the outer wall comprises first and second retention portions that extend around the inflator such that the inflator is retained between the barrier and the retention portions.

Claim 32 (currently amended): A method for protecting an occupant of a vehicle from impact through the use of an airbag module comprising an inflator, a cushion, and a housing having an attachment throat, the method comprising:

transmitting an activation signal to the inflator to trigger egress of inflation gas from the inflator;

conducting the inflation gas through the housing to expel the cushion from the housing through the attachment throat, wherein the attachment throat is attached to the vehicle and the housing is formed substantially of a ~~flexible~~ flexible fabric material; and

conducting the inflation gas into the cushion from the housing via the attachment throat to inflate the cushion.

Claim 33 (currently amended): The method of claim 32, wherein the attachment throat is part of an outer wall, the housing comprising a barrier ~~formed of a flexible material, wherein the barrier and the outer wall are formed as a single piece,~~ wherein the barrier and the outer wall are formed as a single piece, wherein the barrier is positioned between

the inflator and the cushion in the compacted configuration to provide an inflator retention portion containing the inflator and a cushion retention portion containing the cushion in the compacted configuration, wherein conducting the inflation gas through the housing comprises moving the inflation gas across the barrier, from the inflator retention portion to the cushion retention portion.

Claim 34 (original): The method of claim 33, wherein the inflator comprises a diffuser extending through a first orifice of the barrier such that the diffuser is positioned generally within the cushion retention portion, wherein moving the inflation gas across the barrier comprises moving the inflation gas through the first orifice and into the diffuser.

Claim 35 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the diffuser extends from proximate a center of the inflator, along a direction generally perpendicular to an axis of the inflator, wherein moving the inflation gas through the first orifice and into the diffuser comprises moving the inflation gas generally perpendicular to the axis.

Claim 36 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the barrier is formed by first and second flaps extending from the outer wall, wherein the first orifice is formed in the first flap, wherein the first and second flaps are wrapped around the inflator along opposite directions, wherein the diffuser extends through a second orifice formed in the second flap, the method further comprising moving the inflation gas through the second orifice.

Claim 37 (original): The method of claim 34, wherein the barrier is formed by a fabric wall extending between opposing sides of the outer wall, wherein the outer wall comprises first and second retention portions that extend around the inflator such that the inflator is retained between the barrier and the retention portions, wherein moving the inflation gas through the barrier comprises moving the inflation gas through the fabric wall.

Claim 38 (original): The method of claim 32, wherein the attachment throat is attachable to an instrument panel of the vehicle such that the airbag module is suspended within the instrument panel, wherein expelling the cushion from the housing comprises expelling the cushion from the instrument panel.

Claim 39 (original): The method of claim 38, wherein the housing comprises at least one vent formed in the flexible material, the method further comprising venting inflation gas into the instrument panel through the vent.

Claim 40 (currently amended): A method for manufacturing an airbag module for protecting an occupant of a vehicle from impact, the airbag module comprising a cushion, an inflator having a diffuser, and a housing having a cushion retention portion and a first orifice adjacent to the cushion retention portion, wherein the housing comprises an outer wall and a barrier, wherein the barrier and the outer wall are formed as a single piece, the first orifice being formed in the barrier, wherein the barrier provides the cushion retention portion and an inflator retention portion, the method further comprising inserting the inflator into the inflator retention portion by disposing the inflator to rest against the barrier, the method comprising:

inserting the diffuser through the first orifice such the diffuser is positioned substantially within the cushion retention portion;

wrapping a portion of the housing at least partially around the inflator to retain the inflator; and

inserting the cushion into the cushion retention portion.

Claim 41 (canceled)

Claim 42 (currently amended): The method of claim ~~40~~ 41, wherein the housing further comprises first and second flaps extending from the outer wall, wherein the first orifice is formed in the first flap, the method further comprising inserting the diffuser through the second orifice,

wherein wrapping a portion of the housing at least partially around the inflator comprises wrapping the first and second flaps around the inflator along opposite directions.

Claim 43 (currently amended): The method of claim 40 ~~41~~, wherein the barrier is formed by a fabric wall extending between opposing sides of the outer wall, wherein the outer wall comprises first and second retention portions, wherein inserting the inflator into the inflator retention portion comprises moving the inflator between the first and second retention portions, wherein wrapping a portion of the cushion at least partially around the inflator comprises positioning the first and second retention portions to extend around the inflator such that the inflator is retained between the barrier and the retention portions.

Claim 44 (currently amended): The method of claim 40 ~~41~~, wherein the inflator comprises a main body, wherein the diffuser extends from proximate a center of the main body, along a direction generally perpendicular to an axis of the main body, wherein disposing the inflator to rest against the barrier comprises disposing the main body to rest against the barrier.

Claim 45 (original): The method of claim 40, wherein the inflator comprises a recess positioned proximate the diffuser, wherein inserting the diffuser through the first orifice comprises engaging the recess with the first orifice to restrict withdrawal of the diffuser from the first orifice.

Claim 46 (original): The method of claim 40, wherein inserting the cushion into the cushion retention portion comprises folding the cushion along an established fold pattern.

Claim 47 (original): The method of claim 40, wherein inserting the cushion into the cushion retention portion comprises compacting the cushion substantially independent of any established fold pattern.